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ABSTRACT

In this critique of elementary and secondary education in the United States, the first section discusses the history of the U.S. educational system and how the development of the schools' curricula and assessment programs have been adapted to the white, male, Eurocentric style of learning. The second section looks at inequalities in learning and considers the multicultural diversity of students today. Tracking as both result and cause of educational inequality is discussed. The final section uses Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" to compare U.S. schools with the qualities oppressors use to maintain oppression among minorities. The distinct components of oppressive action noted by Freire are: (1) conquest, (2) divide and rule, (3) manipulation, and (4) cultural invasion. These operations are evident in the U.S. educational system, in which wealthier districts have much, and disadvantaged districts, particularly in urban areas, have very little. To ensure educational equity, teachers must be aware of the preferred learning styles of different cultures, and then incorporate strategies aimed at these styles into their teaching. Funding must be equal for all schools, and quality materials and resources should not be reserved for an elite few. (Contains 55 references.) (SLD)

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Oppressor: The Educational System.

Jeanne E. Hernandez-Tutop

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Oppressor: The Educational System

"The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor-when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love."
(Paolo Freire)

INTRODUCTION

In 1790, the population of the United States was approximately four million people. This included 66% English-Scottish background; 8% Irish; and 10% Dutch or German. Eighty-five percent of the United States consisted of Protestant [probably] English-speaking people. The remaining 15% of the people were African Americans, most of whom were slaves (Collins).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century children received their education by (1) parents or by tutors in wealthy families, (2) in church, (3) as apprentices, and (4) at a public school. Advanced education was received in colleges, that taught the classical curriculum. The requirement to enter college was bare literacy (Collins).

"For the good of the children" is a popular phrase in educational circles today. Every time a politician speaks, new curricula are developed, or decisions are handed down to the teachers, it is explained that it is "for the good of the children." Is the education system's curriculum designed for <u>all</u> children? Are our schools set up so <u>all children succeed</u>, despite their race, color or gender? Our school system was constructed to satisfy the white, Western European males' style of learning. Has it changed? Does our school system address the issues

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of diversity that we see in our schools today? Does an OTL (opportunity to learn) exist for everyone in our schools, or are our schools unwittingly oppressors of our society?

In section 1, I will discuss the history of the educational system and how the development of our school's curriculum and assessment programs have been adapted to the white, male Eurocentric style of learning. Section 2 will look at inequalities, and the multicultural diversity that exist in our schools today, and the final section will refer to Paulo Freire's, Pedagogy of the Oppressed to compare our schools with qualities oppressors use to maintain oppression among minorities.

SECTION ONE

HISTORY OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In the last half of the fifth century B.C. the Sophists of Athens were the first to create mass instruction. The educational system was no longer between a teacher and one student, but between a teacher and a group of students. The goal of the Sophists was to develop a person who had universal knowledge in every field. The curriculum taught, embodied grammar, rhetoric, poetry, music, mathematics, astronomy and the physical sciences. This liberal arts education that the Sophists ingrained on the educational system has lasted for a thousand years (Bogus, 1995).

The Greek's educational philosophy continued the western intellectual tradition. Comenius "believed that education was a means of preparing men to live as human beings rather than as a means of fitting them into predetermined occupation or station," (Bogus, 1995). Comenius believed that education was meant for everyone, not just the rich.

Descartes was a contemporary of Comenius. His book on the scientific method was used

until the early twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, two American scientists, Thorndike and Dewey, developed a new science of instruction. Piaget's models of cognition and B.F. Skinner's *"operant conditioning and scheduled reinforcement are the basis for programmed instruction"* today (Bogus, 1995). I.Q. tests were designed on the premises formulated by Newton almost three hundred years ago.

In 1847, Horace Mann introduced the notion of public education. Legislation for compulsory education came into each state between 1852 and 1914 (Hatch, Lewis, & Thomas). Mandatory education was initiated because of child labor laws and the increasing number of immigrants coming into the U.S. Hatch, et al. , reported *"the proponents of universal public education emphasized the role of the public schools in creating a common set of values, language, and experience out of the disparate cultures, religions, and classes that make up the country."*

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

A formal curriculum is the main content that students receive from their school. This can determine the decrease or increase of motivation students demonstrate in effort, growth and development. A curriculum that does not exhibit the diversity of students' lives and culture propagates an incomplete and inaccurate message to the students.

Mickelson & Smith (1991) found that sexism in our educational system continues despite the passage of Title IX. Although researchers have shown that women's performance and fulfillment equal that of men, sexual discrimination still is evident in schooling at all levels. *"For example, curricular materials from kindergarten to college reveal a preponderance of male characters"* (Mickelson & Smith, 1991). An English teacher noticed English was being taught through examples of the birth of Napoleon, writings by Coleridge, and statements like, *"He was*

an interesting talker. A man who had traveled all over the world and lived in half a dozen countries," (Gilligan, 1982).

The structure of our school system dates from the early industrial age (Hill, 1995). Most of the text, curriculum and teaching materials focus mainly on the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The events, themes, and issues studied are viewed chiefly from the point of view of the middle-class Anglo-Americans and Europeans (Banks, 1993). Banks defines Eurocentric curriculums as

> "A curriculum in which concepts, events, and situations are viewed primarily from the perspectives of European nations and cultures and in which Western civilization is emphasized. This approach is based on the assumption that Europeans have made the most important contributions to the development of the United States and the world."

Standardized tests are used (1) so administration can have comparative scores to place students appropriately; (2) to assist students in seeing their weaknesses and strengths, so they can make decisions for a future course of study; and (3) to assess the effectiveness of teachers, schools and districts (Bowers, 1989). Assessment measurements are used in a variety of educational settings to assess personality, cognitive abilities, interests, etc. The most widely used assessments have *"established reliability and validity only within White racial samples"* (Sedlacek & Kim, 1995).

Norm referenced tests, secured tests, and standardized multiple choice tests are unjust because of the inequities that results from the scores students make on them. *"In many schools, districts, and states, interpretations based on a single test score have been used to place students in low track classes, to require students to repeat grades, and to deny high school graduation,"* (Winking, 1997). An OERI (Office of Educational Research and Improvement) report supports these statements by showing court decisions, such as Hobson v. Hansen in 1967, which ruled that IQ tests to justify tracking of students were culturally biased, because the tests were validated by

a white, middle class sample of students. Davey, Lynn & Monty (1991) corroborates this by articulating that standardized multiple choice tests

> *". . .perpetuate sorting students by class and race. Under the guise of tracking for 'ability', students are often segregated by race and class on the basis of test scores . . . the tests make cultural assumptions through the language used and the experiences the tests treat as normative, assumptions that work to the detriment of minority-group and low-income children."*

Davey, et.al., further state that differences of education between poor and rich students are exaggerated by standardized tests because of their biases and misconstrue lack of exposure as lack of ability.

The report by AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, reports test type can influence the scores between sexes. Young women do better on essay and open-ended questions, while boys score higher on multiple choice items. Tests can be balanced or unbalanced according to the composition of test items. These items can differ as to (1) skill area, (2) organization of the item (i.e., multiple choice, true/false, essay), and (3) topic and setting of the item tested. Research showed how test adjustments were made to [favor men], rather than to equalize the assessment measurement. *"Researchers found that, as a result of efforts to make the SAT-Verbal more sex-neutral, the 'relative slight advantage [three to ten points] has been shifted from women to men . . . no efforts have been made to balance the SAT-Math, on which males outscore females by . . . about fifty points "*(AAUW, 1992).

SECTION TWO

INEQUALITIES IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Colonial education in the eighteenth century revealed unequal access to educational resources. Cremin (1970, reported by Hammond) writes:

> *"...provincial America, like all societies, distributed its educational resources unevenly, and to*

some groups, particularly those Indians and Afro-Americans who were enslaved and even those who were not . . . For the slaves, there were few books, few libraries, [and] few schools . . . the doors of wisdom were not only not open, they were shut tight and designed to remain that way . . . [By] the end of the colonial period, there was a well-developed ideology of race inferiority to justify that situation. ".

Hammond reports that ten years after Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 98% of African-American students in the South were in all black schools, and more than 70% in our Northern schools were in predominately minority schools. Hispanic students are being segregated, because most are found in minority schools. The number of Hispanic students enrolled in minority schools increased from 55% in 1968 to 71% by 1986 (Hammond, 1990).

In 1857, one cent per student was being spent on African American students compared with sixteen dollars a day per white student (Hammond, 1990). A century later [1966] discrepancies still existed. Suburban schools were spending $1,000 per student per year, while inner city schools were spending half that amount. Kozol (1991) described the differences between the urban school funds vs. suburban schools in *Savage Inequalities*. In Chicago, the inner city schools spent $5,000 per student, and the suburb [Niles] spent $9,371 per student. The disparity was also evident in New Jersey's inner city school, $3,500 vs. $7,725, and New York City spent $7,300 per student vs. $15,000 per student for suburban Great Neck schools (Hammond, 1990).

The national government, in Goals 2000, funded only 400 million dollars for more than 15,600 school districts; this comes at a time when many districts are faced with cutbacks. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District has decreased their educational budget by $400 million the last three years (Farkas, Hall, Ingersoll, Wells, & Bond). The schools harmed most by this decreased cash flow are the schools in poverty areas. Farkas, et. al., stated that numerous

studies on financing educational reform in 1980's showed *"that the nation's poor children and schools have been left out or left behind in the drive to achieve excellence."*

> *"Tracking and it various modifications have been accepted features of this country's schools for nearly a century. . . By the 1920's, some schools had developed as many as eight distinctly labeled tracks - classical, arts, engineering, academic, normal, commercial business, commercial secretarial, and general - each representing particular curricula that in turn reflected assessments of students' probable social and vocational future" (Wheelock, 1992).*

Tracking in our nation's schools grew in popularity at a time when a large number of immigrant children were enrolling into our public schools. Tracking became a legitimate excuse to segregate students who were viewed as inferior in their capacity for learning the curricula or as not prepared for schooling. Many researchers; such as, Braddock II, Lounsbury, Clark and Buttenwieser, found ability grouping was evident in the organization of classrooms in elementary and secondary schools (Wheelock, 1992).

Wheelock remarked that in some school districts the entire school was considered "high track." These schools were usually lopsided in racial distribution, consisting of a disproportionate number of white, middle-class students. The curricula offered at these schools cultivated the students for post-secondary education. Other schools in the same district, which had a high minority student body, offered remedial curriculum for their children. According to data collected from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 1988, African-American, Latino, Native American, and low-income eighth graders were twice as likely to be placed in remedial math courses than their white counterparts (Wheelock, 1992).

As the Matthew Effect manifests, the schools with high minority enrollment, are more likely to have less experienced teachers in their classrooms. McDonnell's research showed that 42 percent of the remedial, vocational and general-math classes were being taught by teachers

who had been teaching for five years or less, compared with 19 percent for the classes in pre-algebra and algebra-1 (Wheelock, 1992). Argys, Rees, and Brewer (1996) substantiated this in their report *Detracking America's Schools: Equity at Zero Cost?* They stated that students in honor classes would most likely be taught by more experienced teachers than those students in general education tracks, and more of these teachers would have a master's degree. Students in above-average math classes had teachers who were also more experienced and more likely to have a master's degree than those students in below-average or heterogenous classes.

Socioeconomic status can also play an essential roll in tracking students. In a RAND study, conducted by Rees, Argys, and Brewer (1996), a distinct connection between socioeconomic status and track, and between race/ethnicity and track was found. They cited an example where 14% of the children in the lowest socioeconomic quartile were in classes determined to be above-average 10th grade classes, compared with 38% of the highest socioeconomic quartile enrolled in similar classes. Cultures most represented in low track or mixed ability classes were Hispanics and Blacks.

The use of IQ testing to place children in low ability tracks has been prevalent in our school districts to determine ability tracking, placement in special education and admission into higher education. This practice has been challenged in our court systems. One such example was Hobson v. Hansen (1967). Here the court decided that IQ tests used to track students *"were culturally biased because they were standardized on a white, middle-class sample"* (Unknown, 1985). Moses v. Washington Parish School Board (1971) involved the use of IQ and achievement test scores. The IQ tests were used for special education placement, and the achievement scores were used later for ability tracking. The court ruled against the use of test scores for these purposes (Unknown, 1985). IQ testing has also been used in placing non-English

speaking students into special education classes. One court case, Diana v. California State Board of Education (1970), accused the tests of being linguistically biased. Research indicated that students (Mexican-Americans) scored 15 more points on the test if they could use their home language. Because of this law suit, the California state legislature passed a law requiring that tests used for placement must be authenticated by an evaluation of the student's developmental history, cultural background and academic achievement. (Unknown, 1985).

The minority teachers' population in our schools is at 10%, while the minority student population has been rising since 1976 (Pierceynski, Matranga & Peltier). A study done in Wisconsin suggests that by the year 2000, minority teachers will represent 3% of the teaching staff, and the minority students will be at 38%. According to Goodwin (1995) Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders comprise only 1% percent of all teachers. Lewis (1996) reported in *"1990-91, 9.2% of public elementary and secondary school teachers were Black/African Americans, 3.1% were Hispanic, and 1% were Asian/Pacific Islanders."*

Since the late 1980's, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami together enrolled almost 100,000 new students each year (Hill, 1993). These were children of immigrants or were foreign-born. Schools in these larger cities have unstable economic bases, more crime, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, child abandonment, drug use and disease, compared with their Anglo-Saxon middle-class counterparts in the suburban areas. RAND conducted studies showing that educators claim schools cannot face these problems. These reports showed that schools could do nothing to increase students' learning and test scores until schools got more money, children had better prenatal and health care, better home environments and more conventional adult role models.

SECTION THREE

OPPRESSOR: THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Paolo Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* alludes oppressors have distinct characteristics of action to maintain oppression. These characteristics are (1) conquest, (2) divide and rule, (3) manipulation, and (4) cultural invasion. Many of these characteristics exist in our educational system here in the United States. This section will show how the organization and implementation of our school's curriculum supports oppression of certain cultures in the United States.

Conquest

Conquering people reduces men to the status of things. Oppressors keep conquests passive, and embed fantasies to maintain the status quo (Freire, 1968). In our school system some myths that come to mind are: (1) Any hard worker can succeed in school, (2) all have a universal right to an equal education; (3) the majority is industrious, while the minority is lazy, dishonest and uncaring in their education; and (4) minorities are inferior to the majority.

Our educational system is not equal for all students. Disparities are massive in our schools, which contributes to the disproportionate opportunity for knowledge for our students. Kozol (quoted by Darling-Hammond) says an inner city student who tells how his school has rusty pipes exposed through the ceiling and rain coming in on rainy days, schools in wealthier areas have more beautiful environments. These differences are not just in physical facilities. They extend to funds, also. Schools in urban and rural areas have fewer funds to spend on quality teachers, equipment and learning materials that students in these communities need. *"Measurable and compounded inequalities leave most 'minority' children with fewer and lower-quality books, materials, computers, labs, and other accoutrements of education, as well as less-qualified and*

experienced teachers . . . " (Darling-Hammond).

Why does this discrepancy in funding exist? In the United States educational funding comes from general taxes, mainly from local property taxes and some state grants. It makes sense that the higher the property value, the higher the tax revenue; and thus, there are more funds to put into local school districts. One example of taxing is given in *"Inequality and Access to Knowledge,"* by Darling-Hammond: One hundred of the wealthiest districts in Texas were taxed $.47 per $100.00 (1989), which allocated more than $7,000 per student, compared with the 100 poorest districts that were taxed at $.70 per $100.00, allocating only $3,000 per student.

The disproportionate funding in our school systems becomes increasingly evident in the services being rendered in schools. The wealthier school districts have more experienced teachers and better instructional resources. Dissimilarity in our schools is blatant. While working as a substitute teacher in the Chula Vista Elementary School District I witnessed the differences of schools in wealthier neighborhoods compared with the poorer ones. The schools in the better neighborhoods had manicured lawns, clean drapes or blinds, clean or newly painted walls, plenty of cupboard space, wonderful play areas for upper and lower elementary students. The expectations of students by teachers were also different, and the way teachers talked about their students and parent involvement varied considerably. These differences were evident in the same school district, just from the perspective of different socioeconomic backgrounds within that district. At a staff meeting a principal mentioned that superintendent told her she noticed the difference of various schools' upkeep and maintenance within the district. The superintendent described the grounds at the lower socioeconomic school as "ugly."

In an article entitled, *"Some Components of the Income Disparities,"* the author states how minorities receive less pay than whites, because they do not have an equal opportunity to

learn relevant information in school or to get special training for specific jobs. The nonwhite worker may have an equal amount of schooling, but the content of their education is less relevant for optimizing earnings (Unknown, 1985).

In 1969 Arthur Jensen wrote an article entitled, *"How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?"* to show nonwhite inferiority to whites, In this article Jensen collected an assortment of data that he explains as proof of hereditary being the cause of lower African-American average intelligence, scholastic performance and occupational status. Jensen's assorted data were gathered from studies by James Coleman, Otis Dudley Duncan, Rashi Fein and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Unknown, 1985). This article was considered very controversial, and is one example of the Anglo American showing minorities to be inferior.

Divide and Rule

Oppressors must divide the people and keep it divided to remain in power. Divide and rule is achieved by (a) weakening the oppressed by isolating them, and (b) creating and deepening rifts among them. This can be done by domineering methods of government bureaucracy or cultural action with which the oppressor manipulates the people by giving them the impression that they are being helped.

School funding is an example of government bureaucracy. Instead of all the taxes going into one big state school fund and given to schools equally, it is controlled by local revenues that automatically give wealthier schools more funds. Ascher states in *"Retaining Good Teachers in Urban Schools"* that a primary problem with retaining quality, experienced teachers is the limited funds urban schools have for teacher salaries, educational materials and general maintenance of the schools' environment. A release from the White House, Office of the Vice President (1998), stated that a program will be created to strengthen public schools *"in high poverty urban and*

rural communities where low expectations, too many poorly prepared teachers, and overwhelmed school systems create significant barriers to high achievement."

Bilingual education is the education of students in two languages, English and their native language. In the United States there are 3.2 million LEP [limited English proficient] students nationwide. The most common languages for LEP students are: Spanish (72.9%), Vietnamese (3.9%), Hmong (1.8%), Cantonese (1.7%), and Cambodian (1.6%). Over 75 percent of these students attend schools in poverty stricken areas. In 1997, 1,381,393 LEP students attended Californian schools, and 80% were Hispanic (OBEMLA, 1998).

Bilingual education is an example of the government manipulating the people by giving them the impression they are being helped. Most of the LEP students are in poverty areas, so the funding for these schools is low. These schools do not have quality teachers nor materials. The research results of Salvador & Ochoa (1995) suggests that effective bilingual teachers must (1) be supplied with quality L1 and L2 educational materials and (2) have adequate knowledge about effective teaching strategies for the particular LEP group they are teaching. Research conducted by Constantino (1994) showed that teachers are not prepared, and they are resentful or fearful of non-English or LEP students in their classrooms. The ESL teachers were also found not to use instructional practices that research showed were beneficial for LEP students.

Freire states, *"the more alienated people are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided."* Alienation is a contributor to LEP dropout rate. Alienation can occur when beliefs communicated by the core curriculum differ from those held by the minority student. Conflicts between the beliefs of the minority student and how the core curriculum is taught in the classroom may make the curriculum offensive or incomprehensible to the student.

Researchers (Chicago Board of Education, 1991; Garcia, 1991; Gonzales, 1981; cited by

Cornell 1995) stated that there is a concern that separate bilingual classrooms may be considered a form of segregation and a negation of equal education opportunity. Hakuta stated, in a briefing at the Aspen Institute :Seminar on bilingual education with Congressional leaders, that when background factors are strictly controlled, it is shown that all children learn English at the same rate regardless of the kind of program they are in (National Research Council, 1997). Students want to learn English and realize the importance English is to their future. Gonzalez & Maez stated that the importance of non-English speakers learning English is validated by the students; *"once they encounter English in school, students are quick to realize that the only language that counts is English, a language they are struggling to acquire."* Hakuta confirms this by reporting both parents and students feel there is a motivation to learn English.

Freire mentions that "leadership training courses" are alienating. People in a particular community, whom the elites feel are leaders, are chosen to be cultivated into leaders of their community. However, once these people come back into their community with new resources they did not have before, they either oppress their own people or became strangers in their own neighborhoods. Fordham corroborates this alienation process in *"Peer-Proofing Academic Competition Among Black Adolescents: 'Acting White' Black American Style."* Research literature suggests by separating African-Americans from their peers, negatively affects their identity as African-Americans. This separation from their peers suggests to them that they are, *"in some important intellectual and nonintellectual ways, different from other Black people, and . . . clones of their White peers."* A statement from an African-American student in this article said that trying to place him in an honor's track class was trying to "reinvent him," to make him into a non-Black person. Freire says that the oppressors do not like to promote the whole community, only a selected few; in this way oppression continues.

Standardized tests help to alienate cultures and promote only the few. Helms (cited by Sedlacek & Kim, 1995) stated that comparing different racial and cultural groups using cognitive ability measures developed from a Eurocentric standpoint were bogus. Sedlacek also discussed how it was unlikely one measure could be created that would work well for everyone, since each person has different cultural and racial experiences, and presents their cognitive abilities differently.

Tracking is another example of alienation. Standardized test scores, which were normed by a Eurocentric population, separates many cultures into the lower tracks. Right now in the educational community tracking is a controversial issue. One group says tracking should be discontinued, because some classes are disproportionately minority, while the other side feels by discontinuing tracking, the average and above-average student would be hurt. To stop tracking without increasing funds for better quality teachers, equipment and resources would reveal the 'false generosity' of the oppressor. In other words, the oppressor, would buy peace for themselves, saying that they are helping the diverse population.

Manipulation

The dominate elite manipulates the oppressed to conform to their objectives. One way of manipulating is to give individuals an appetite for personal success. In education, the number of women who are teachers vs. administrators is an excellent example. In 1927, 10.2 percent of local school board members were women. By 1990 the number had grown to 33.7 percent with 2.9 percent black and 1.3 percent Hispanic (the racial figures are not necessarily female). Although elementary and secondary education is still considered a woman's field of work, 72 percent of teachers were female and only 27.7 percent were principals. Female superintendents numbered at 4.8 percent, while men were 95.2 percent. In 1991, nine out of fifty chiefs of state school officers

were women (AAUW Report,1992).

The American dream is to become successful, have a nice home and all the things that go with an affluent lifestyle. In order to achieve this quality of life, a quality education is needed. Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi (cited by Leung, 1994) stated for school to be motivating it must be connected to societal benefits, for example, finding a job, making money and being successful in the work force. These desires encourage groups of people to pursue education in order to raise their status. Some minority groups do not see education as a reward, because they have been unwillingly joined into society and unwillingly delegated to menial jobs or living standards. The dominant culture whets the appetite of the oppressed, saying a good education is there for all to acquire, and with a good education the American dream will be fulfilled.

Cultural Invasion

The oppressors impose their view of the world upon the oppressed and discourage the creativity of the invaded group by repressing their communication. Cultural invasion is done by molding the oppressed people into their [the oppressors] likeness. For cultural invasion to be successful, the oppressed must see themselves as inferior to the dominate elite.

Leung (1994) reports that historically it was presumed that the Anglo culture represented the norm to which other cultures were to be compared. Because of this assumption, measurement tools were based solely on the Anglo western society, and when non-Anglo, non-western cultures were tested with these instruments, it was concluded they were inferior.

Studies have been conducted to determine differences among cultures. One such study was done in 1874 by Sir Francis Galton, who thought racial improvement would be accomplished by selective mating and sterilization of the "unfit." Terman, who revised the Binet Intelligence Scales, found the level of intelligence that represents mental retardation is common in the

Spanish-Indians and Mexican families in the Southwest United States, and also among the African American population. In 1922, Hunter reported a correlation of higher intelligence on the Otis Intelligence Test among American Indians who had more white blood. More recently, in 1973, Jensen declared there was genetic inferiority in minorities living in the United States. The four major ethnic groups that have been maligned as inferior at some time in American history are: American Indians, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians (Sue & Padilla cited by Leung, 1994).

An oppressed society brings feelings of inferiority into the home. The family structure is usually authoritarian, rigid and dominating in families of the oppressed. The children in these families become indifferent or engage in destructive action (Freire, 1968). The U.S. Department of Education says at-risk behavior is teenage pregnancy, transmission of sexual disease and involvement with drugs or gangs. According to Rosado, 1991, and Valverde, 1987 (cited by Cornell, 1995), language/ethnic minority students are more likely to exhibit these traits than Anglo American students. These traits are more evident, in minority students because after being turned away by peers and teachers of the "dominate" culture, they search for other ways of being accepted.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

The education system here in the United States, is undergoing major changes both nationally and locally. The high minority unemployment and dropout rate is demanding attention from our politicians, parents and communities. Students must have equal opportunities to learn. Research suggests ways to improve education among our minority students, but it usually does not get to the teachers. Higher education institutes are not including these methods into their curriculum. Staff development on proper teaching methods for language acquisition success

needs to be top priority for all schools. Segregating students into separate classrooms is not the answer; students are still dropping out and feeling inferior to the dominant culture. Teachers and administrators must be made aware of data showing the preferred learning styles of different cultures and then initiate these strategies into their classrooms. Funding must to all schools must be equal. Quality materials and resources should not be for a select few. And, finally, measurements for cognitive abilities must be normed on diverse cultural groups.

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